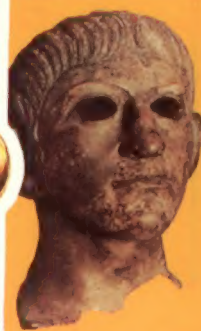




A HISTORY OF BRITAIN

# THE ROMANS



Ladybird



## A HISTORY OF BRITAIN

### *Acknowledgments:*

The author and publishers would like to acknowledge the use of additional illustrative material as follows:  
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A catalogue record for this book is available  
 from the British Library

Published by Ladybird Books Ltd Loughborough Leicestershire UK  
 Ladybird Books Inc Auburn Maine 04210 USA

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# THE ROMANS



by TIM WOOD

*illustrations by* PETER DENNIS

*Series Consultants:* School of History  
University of Bristol

Ladybird



## he Romans

This book covers a period of over four hundred and fifty years. During this time, the Iron Age Britons were conquered by the Romans. Britain became part of the mighty Roman Empire, which stretched from what is now north of England to the Red Sea. Many Britons were forced to accept the Roman way of life.



### Roman Britain – time chart

Date	What happened
55 BC	Roman fleet appears off British coast
54 BC	Julius Caesar lands in Britain
0	
AD 43	Claudius invades Britain with his general, Aulus Plautus. Most of England conquered in four years. The legionaries begin to build fortresses. Caratacus defeated in Wales and taken prisoner. Suetonius becomes Governor of Britain and attacks the Druids on Anglesey
AD 60	The Iceni tribe, led by Boudicca, revolts, burns London, and is then defeated. The Brigantes tribe is conquered. Wales is conquered and many legionary forts built there. Agricola becomes Governor of Britain and marches into Scotland (Caledonia) defeating the Caledonians at the battle of Mons Graupius. Roman towns built at Lincoln and Gloucester
AD 100	Scotland abandoned
AD 122	The Emperor Hadrian visits Britain. Hadrian's wall is begun

## The Roman Empire

BRITAIN

The modern names of countries are given as a guide to the extent of the Roman Empire

GERMANY  
FRANCE  
SPAIN  
ITALY  
Rome  
GREECE  
TURKEY  
Mediterranean Sea  
AFRICA



AD 140 Romans advance into Scotland again and start to build the Antonine wall north of Hadrian's wall

AD 150 Rebellions in northern Britain defeated. Antonine wall abandoned. Hadrian's wall overrun by Scottish tribes and many forts destroyed



AD 200 Hadrian's wall rebuilt. Romans attack Scotland again and Scottish tribes surrender. Britain divided into two provinces

AD 250 Saxon pirates raid the south coast and other tribes attack from the north. Britain divided into four provinces

AD 300 Emperor Constantius attacks Scotland

AD 313 Christianity accepted throughout the Roman Empire

AD 350 Irish, Scots and Saxons raid Britain. Legions on Hadrian's wall defeated. Count Theodosius clears invaders from Britain and rebuilds Hadrian's wall. Hadrian's wall overrun and not rebuilt



AD 400 Roman troops begin to leave Britain

AD 410 British towns told to protect themselves from new invaders



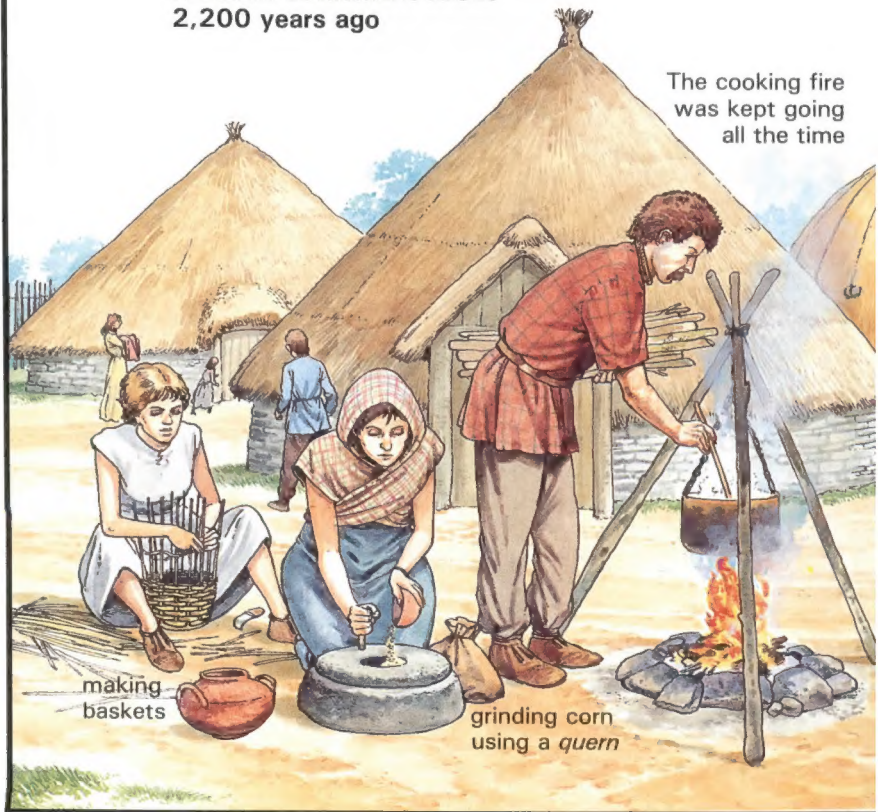


## Britain before the Roman invasion

About two thousand seven hundred years ago, people called *Celts* came to Britain from Europe. Gradually, they mixed in with the people who were already there. All those living in Britain became known as Britons. They were divided into groups called tribes.

A British settlement about  
2,200 years ago

The cooking fire  
was kept going  
all the time



making  
baskets

grinding corn  
using a *quern*

This map shows where  
some of the main  
British tribes lived

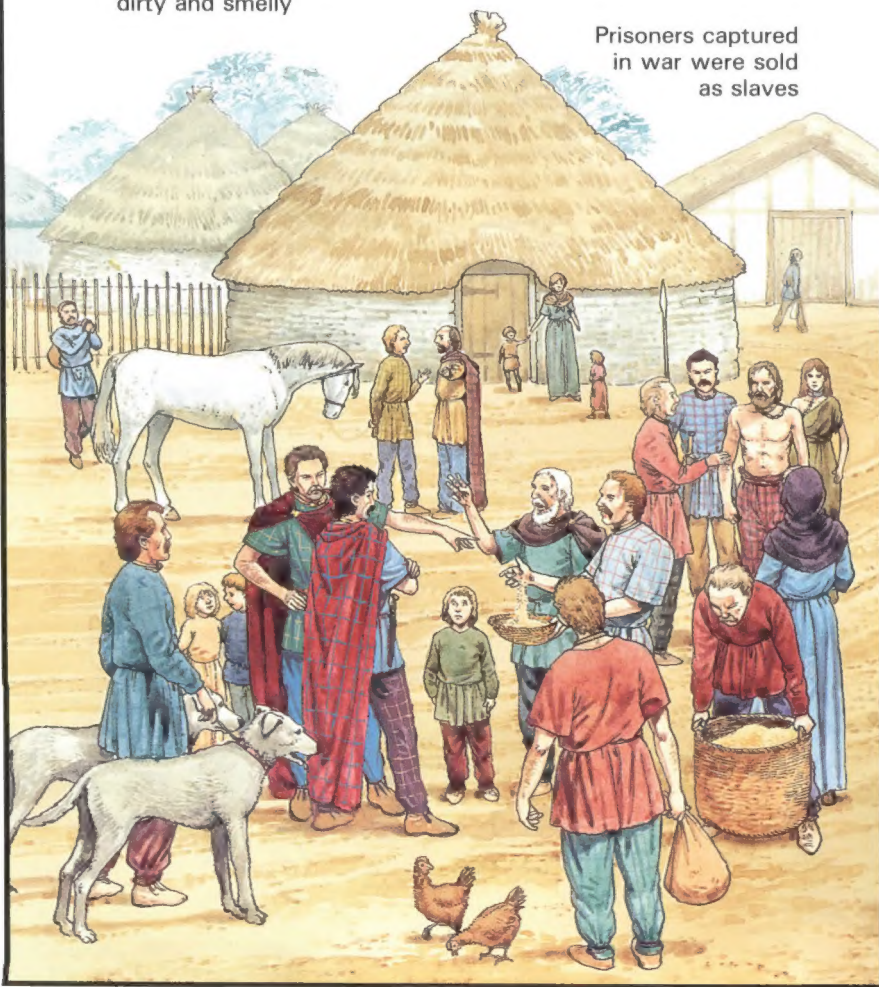


Many Britons lived in round houses like these,  
which were grouped in small villages. Houses  
were made of wood with mud plaster inside

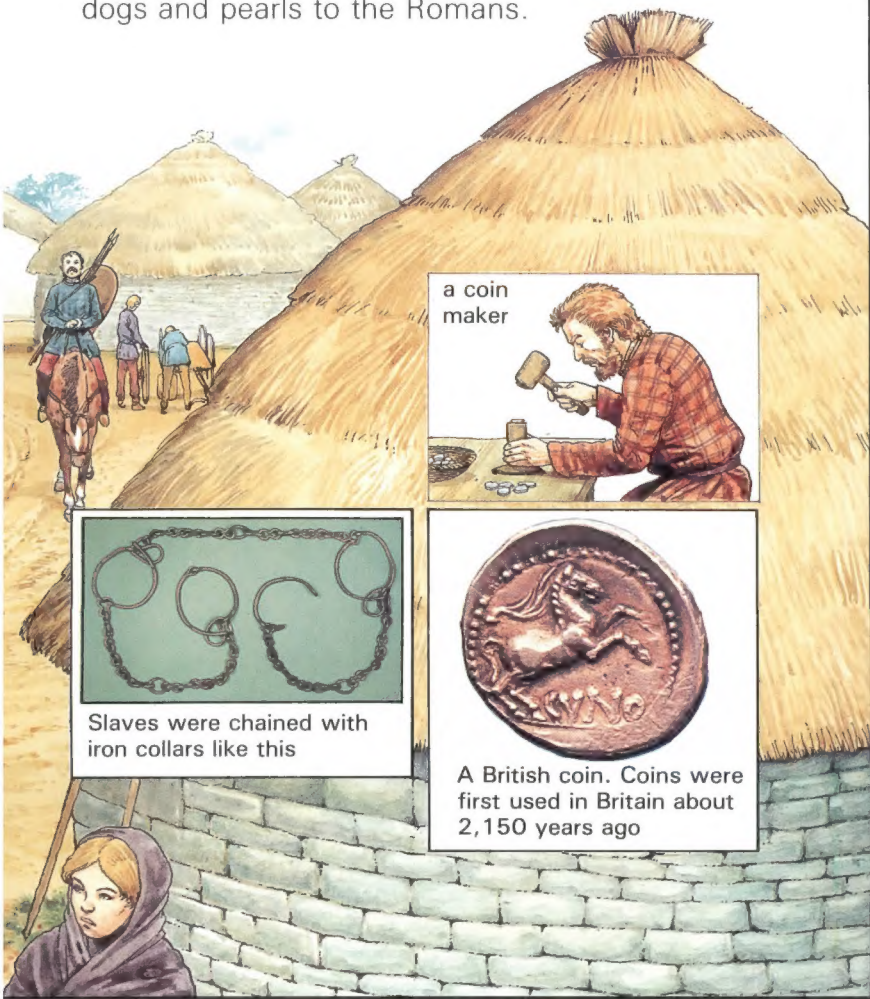


The Celts brought with them the skill of making iron tools and weapons. They built towns, which became trading centres.

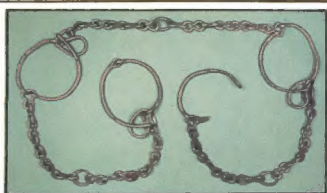
Prisoners captured  
in war were sold  
as slaves



People came to the towns to swap food and animals from their farms for pottery, jewellery, silver and iron goods. Some British tribes already traded with the Roman Empire, which covered most of Europe. They sold lead, gold, tin, wheat, slaves, cattle, hunting dogs and pearls to the Romans.



a coin maker



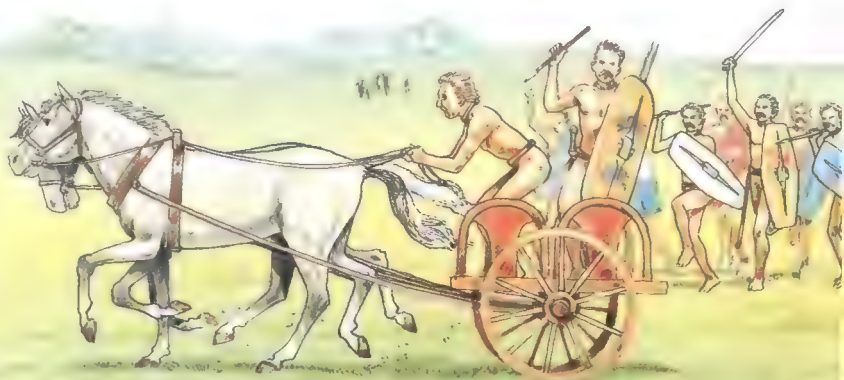
Slaves were chained with iron collars like this



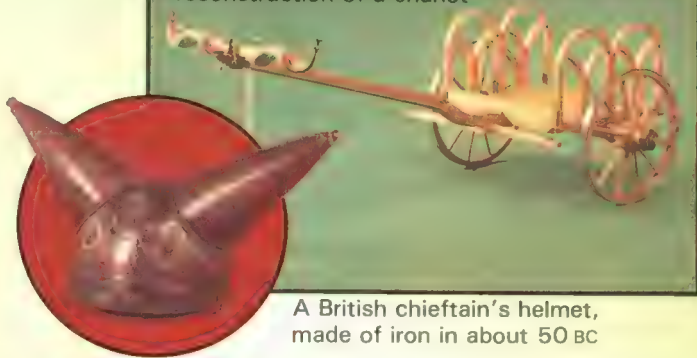
A British coin. Coins were first used in Britain about 2,150 years ago

## Nobles and Druids

The leaders of the British tribes were called nobles. They drove chariots into battle while ordinary warriors fought on foot with spears and swords. Many painted or tattooed themselves with a blue dye called woad.



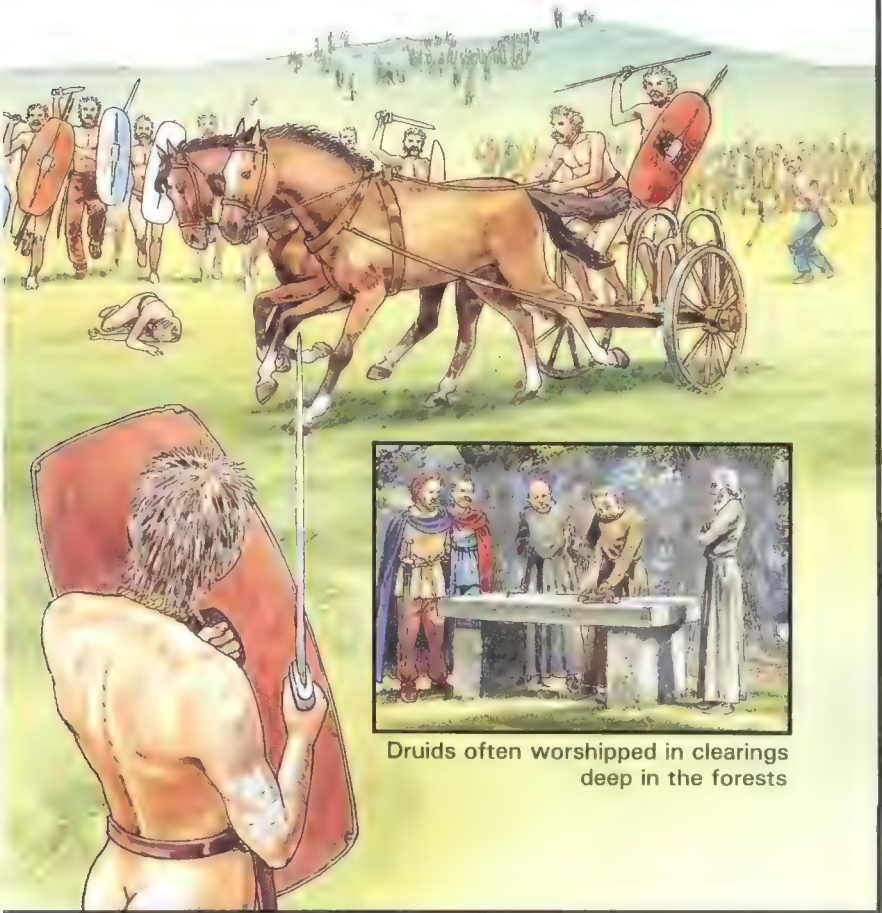
reconstruction of a chariot



A British chieftain's helmet, made of iron in about 50 BC



It is thought that the *Druids*, or priests, had great power. Little is known of their religion except that they believed in many gods and they may have sacrificed humans. They had fled to Britain from Europe when the Romans had tried to stamp out their cruel religion.



Druids often worshipped in clearings deep in the forests

## **The Romans attack Britain, 55 BC**

On a late summer morning in 55 BC, a Roman fleet appeared off the British coast near Dover. Consul Julius Caesar had brought an army of 10,000 men to see if Britain was worth invading. He also wanted to punish those British tribes who had been helping the Celts in Europe in their fight against the Romans.



At first the Romans were afraid of the thousands of British warriors waiting to fight them on the beach. It was not until the standard bearer of the 10th legion jumped into the water that the rest of the Roman soldiers followed.

The Britons fought desperately, but they were no match for the well trained Romans, and soon fled.

After his victory, Caesar left Britain. He returned with another army in the following year but left shortly after. The Romans did not return to Britain for ninety seven years.

a British shield



a Roman helmet

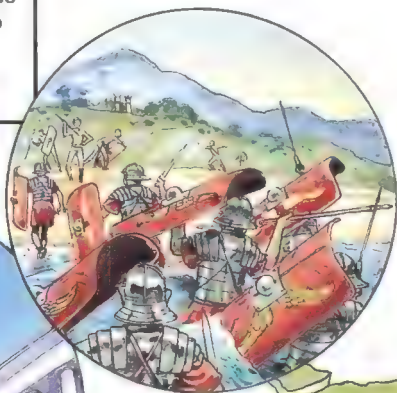




## Conquest, AD 43 – AD 60

In AD 43, the Roman Emperor, Claudius, decided to make Britain part of the Roman Empire. An army of 40,000 Roman soldiers landed at Richborough in Kent. This time the Romans had come to stay.

Roman soldiers swam across the water in their armour to capture the island of Anglesey, the centre of the Druid religion



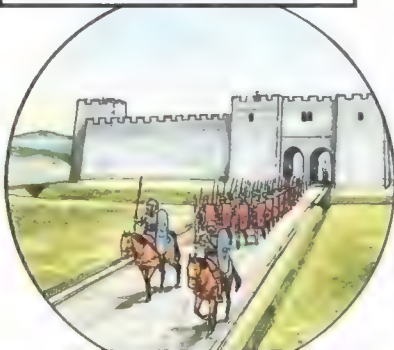
The chief enemy of Rome, Caratacus, King of the Catuvellauni, fought the Romans in Wales. But he was betrayed by the Queen of the Brigantes, captured and sent to Rome as a slave



The Roman army swept the Britons aside and marched deep into the countryside. They made alliances with some tribes and conquered others, one by one. Slowly, they drove their enemies into the mountains of Wales and Scotland.



The Romans did not invade Scotland until AD 84. Although they won some battles they could not conquer Scotland



Wherever they went, the Romans built roads and forts to control the Britons



Emperor Claudius

## The Roman army

The Roman soldiers who invaded Britain were part of the best army in the world. They were better trained and armed than the wild Britons.

The Roman army was divided into *legions*, each one containing roughly 5,000 *legionaries* who signed up for twenty five years. Each legionary was highly trained with daily sword

practice and marching. Legionaries were also trained to build roads, bridges, forts and *siege-engines*.

A legionary wore heavy armour and had a large shield for protection. He carried two javelins and a short, sharp sword. Each legionary took food, cooking gear, an axe and two sharp stakes to help to build a wall round the camp at night.

A Roman legionary with his armour and equipment





The Roman army also contained many auxiliaries. These were soldiers from conquered tribes all over the Roman Empire.

Some auxiliaries had special skills:

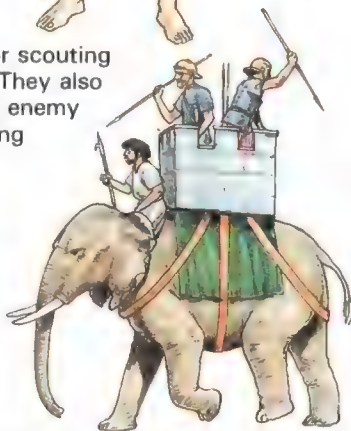
*Archers* – many came from Syria. The Romans also used mounted archers



*Slingers* – many came from the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea



The *cavalry* was used for scouting and carrying messages. They also chased fleeing enemy soldiers during battles



The Roman Emperor, Claudius, even had some elephants

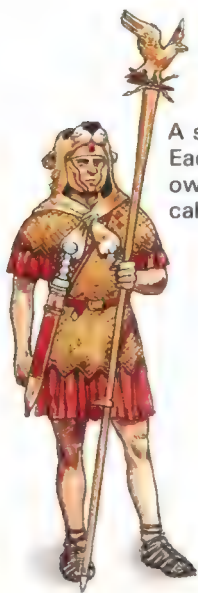
## Battle

Legionaries were taught to fight in different formations. This usually gave them an advantage over their enemies who were not so well organised. In battle the whole army could fight as one man or split into smaller groups. Trumpets were used to give the signals.

*cohort* (about 480 soldiers)

There were 10 cohorts in a legion





A standard bearer.  
Each legion had its  
own standard  
called an *eagle*



An experienced officer  
called a *centurion*  
was in charge of a  
century

*century* (about 80 soldiers)  
There were 6 centuries  
in a cohort



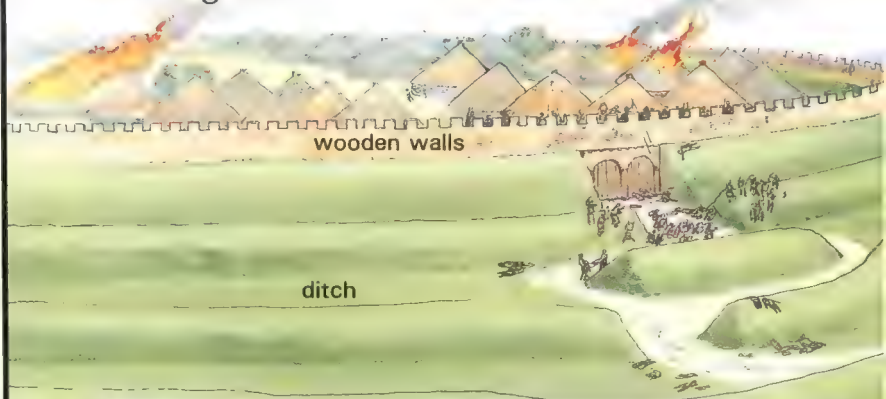
a Roman sword





## British hill forts

The British tribes had built many hill forts. The Romans could not conquer Britain until they had captured these strongholds.



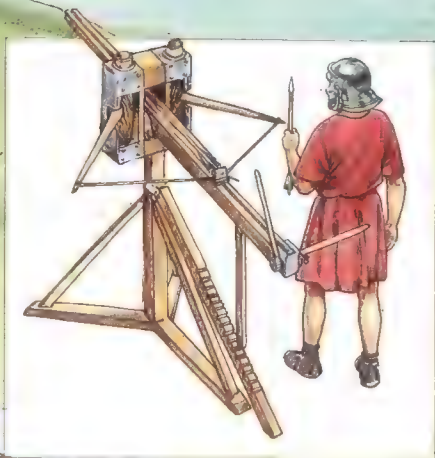
There were different kinds of hill forts. Many had several ditches and walls round the hill top. A maze sometimes hid the main gate.

The tribe lived in huts built inside the walls. They brought their animals into the enclosure for safety when the fort was attacked.

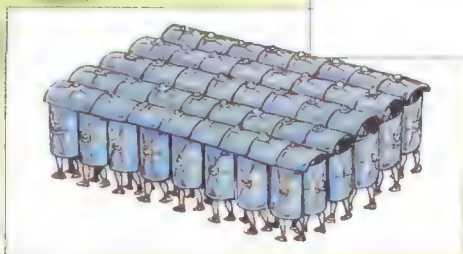


The body of this Briton was found at Maiden Castle in Dorset. A ballista bolt had passed through his body and lodged in his spine

Maiden Castle – one of the  
largest of over 3,000  
hill forts in Britain



The Romans used  
large wooden  
catapults called  
ballistas to fire giant  
spears or bolts into  
a hill fort

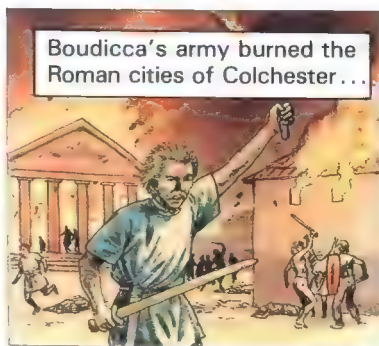


The Romans locked their shields together to protect  
themselves from rocks and spears. The formation, which  
looked like a hard shell, was called a 'tortoise'

## Boudicca's revolt, AD 60

The fighting continued for almost twenty years after the Roman invasion. The Romans won many victories and it seemed as though nothing could stop them from ruling the whole country.

Then, in AD 60, the Iceni tribe led by their queen, Boudicca, revolted.

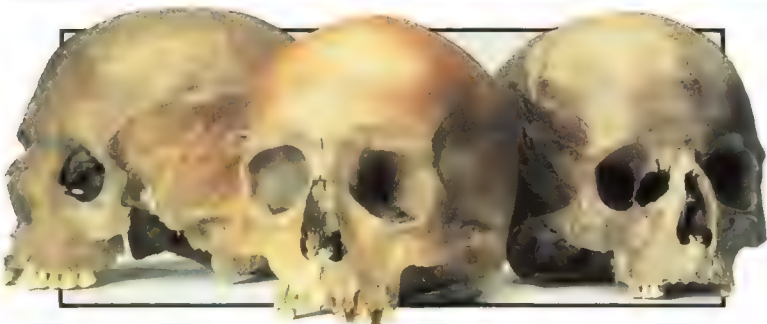


### Boudicca meets Suetonius

- 1 Other tribes joined Boudicca and soon she had a huge army of 100,000 soldiers
- 2 Suetonius, the Roman Governor of Britain, was in Anglesey fighting the Druids. Hearing news of Boudicca's army, he marched quickly south east with two legions to meet the Iceni



✕ A great battle took place in the Midlands. Most of the British were killed and Boudicca herself took poison rather than be captured by the Romans. The rebellion was over



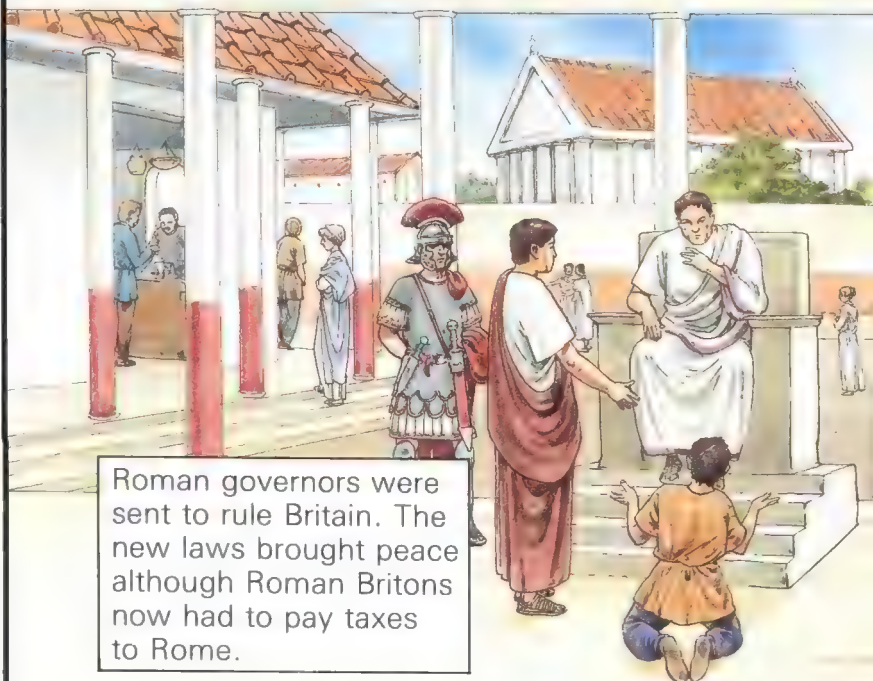
These skulls, found in a London stream bed, may have belonged to three of Boudicca's victims



## The new Britons

After Boudicca's revolt, the Romans brought a new order to Britain. It became part of the Roman Empire and more Romans began to settle there. Latin became the main language for administration. Everyone had to obey

The Romans built towns and cities which became centres of trade. Some Roman Britons grew wealthy by selling goods to the Romans.



Roman governors were sent to rule Britain. The new laws brought peace although Roman Britons now had to pay taxes to Rome.

Roman laws and follow the Roman way of life. Soon it was hard to tell who had been born in Britain and who was a foreigner. Britons became 'Roman Britons'.

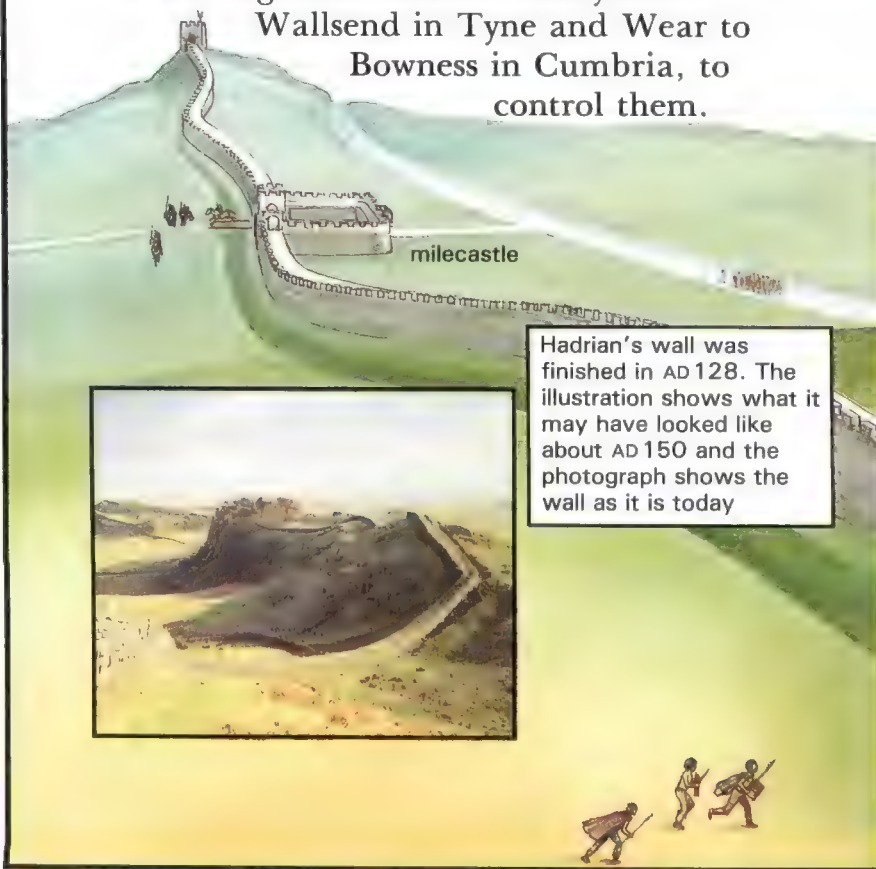
British nobles were trained to rule their tribes in the Roman way. This brought peace and riches to many, although some Britons who continued to fight against their new rulers were captured and became slaves. The Roman army built good roads so the legions could march quickly to any part of the country to keep the peace.



## Hadrian's wall

The Romans built forts in Wales and in the north of England to protect their land. The fierce, unconquered tribes hiding in the mountains and valleys of Scotland raided northern England again and again.

The Emperor Hadrian decided to build a wall right across the country from Wallsend in Tyne and Wear to Bowness in Cumbria, to control them.



## Facts about Hadrian's wall

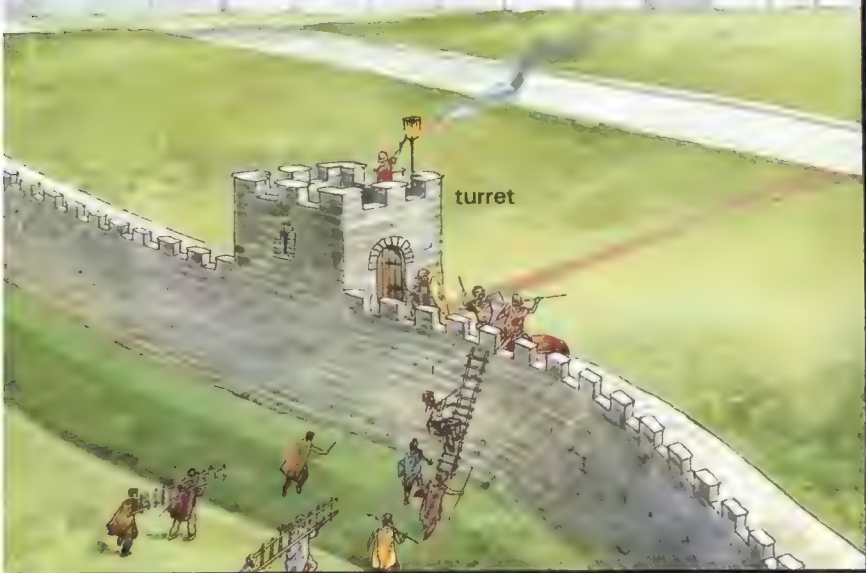
15,000 Roman soldiers guarded the wall, which was 120 kilometres long and about 4 metres high.

Every 8 kilometres there was a large fort, which could hold up to 1,000 Roman soldiers.

About every 1,500 metres there was a small fort called a *milecastle*, which could hold up to 30 soldiers.

Between the milecastles were two turrets, which could shelter the sentries.

Sentries guarded the wall all the time. If the tribes attacked, the sentries ran for help or signalled with flags or fires.

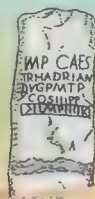
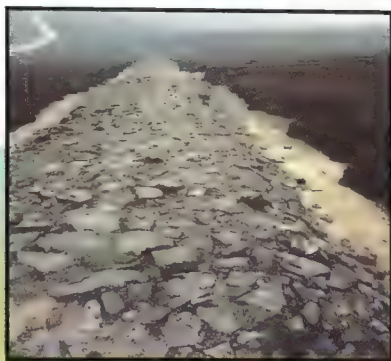




## Roman roads

The Romans built many roads. The legionaries did all the work, digging out the trenches, cutting the stones to shape, and laying them. A curved surface and ditches at the side made sure that the rain ran off the road and did not wash the stones away.

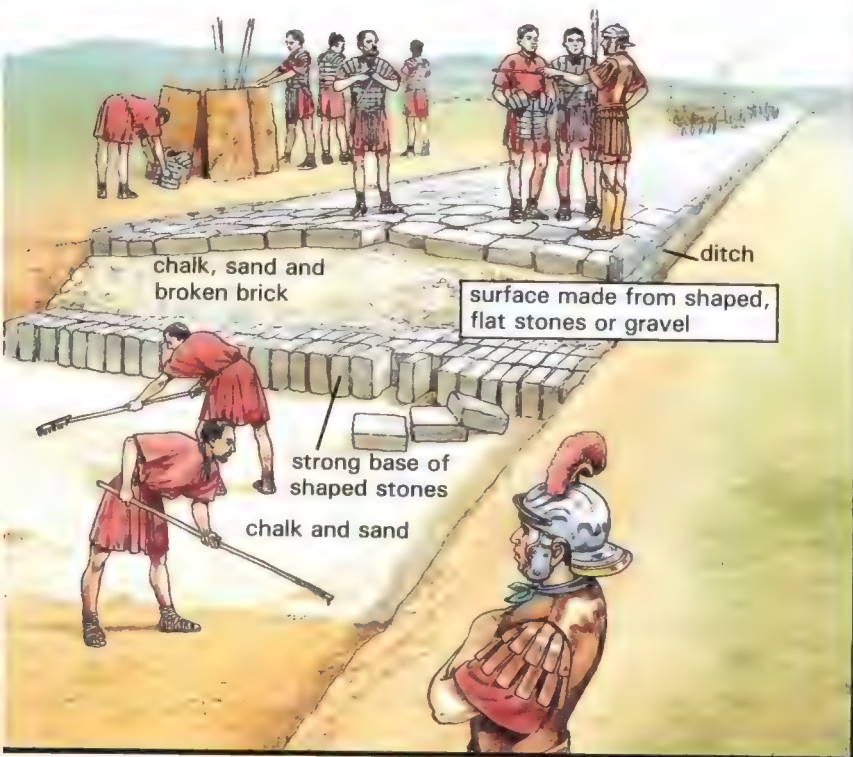
Remains of a Roman road in Yorkshire



milestone



Roman surveyors used an instrument called a *groma*. Strings with weights were hung from a wooden frame so that the surveyor could get a straight line by looking through them. Where trees or hills were in the way, the surveyors built fires in a straight line and used the smoke to mark the route.



## Roman towns

From about AD 150 onwards, the Romans built walls round their towns to keep them safe from attack.

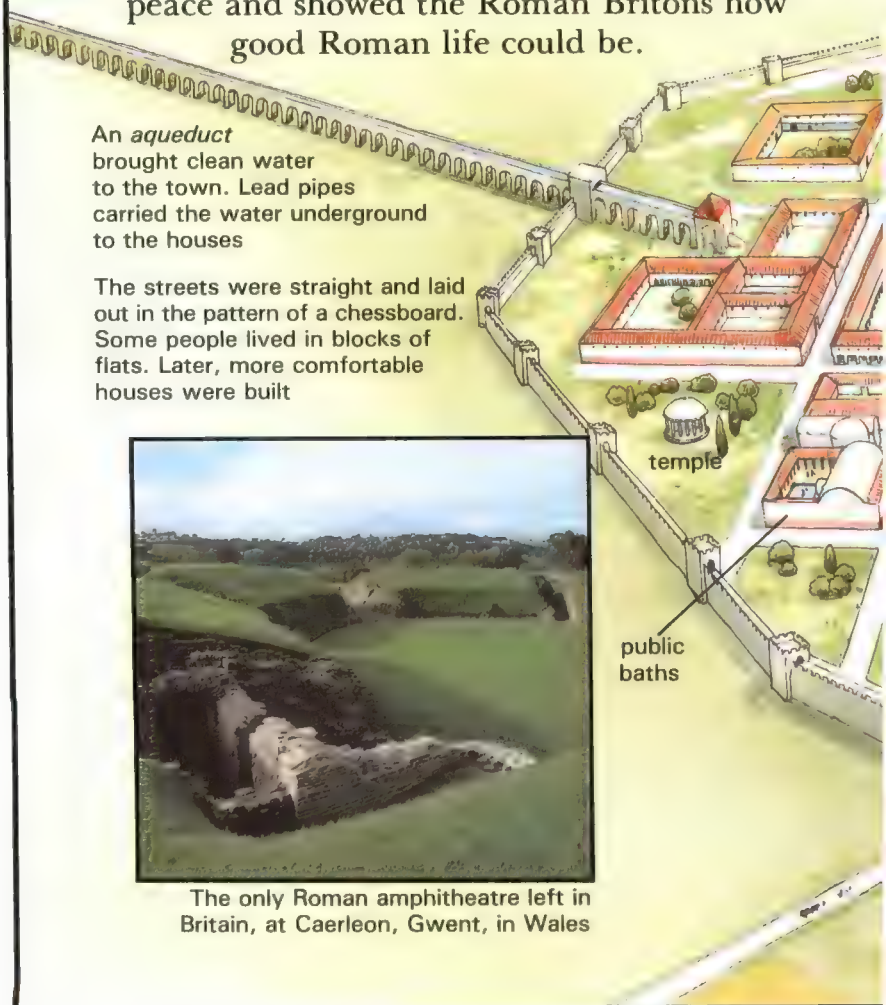
Strongly built towns helped to keep peace and showed the Roman Britons how good Roman life could be.

An *aqueduct* brought clean water to the town. Lead pipes carried the water underground to the houses

The streets were straight and laid out in the pattern of a chessboard. Some people lived in blocks of flats. Later, more comfortable houses were built

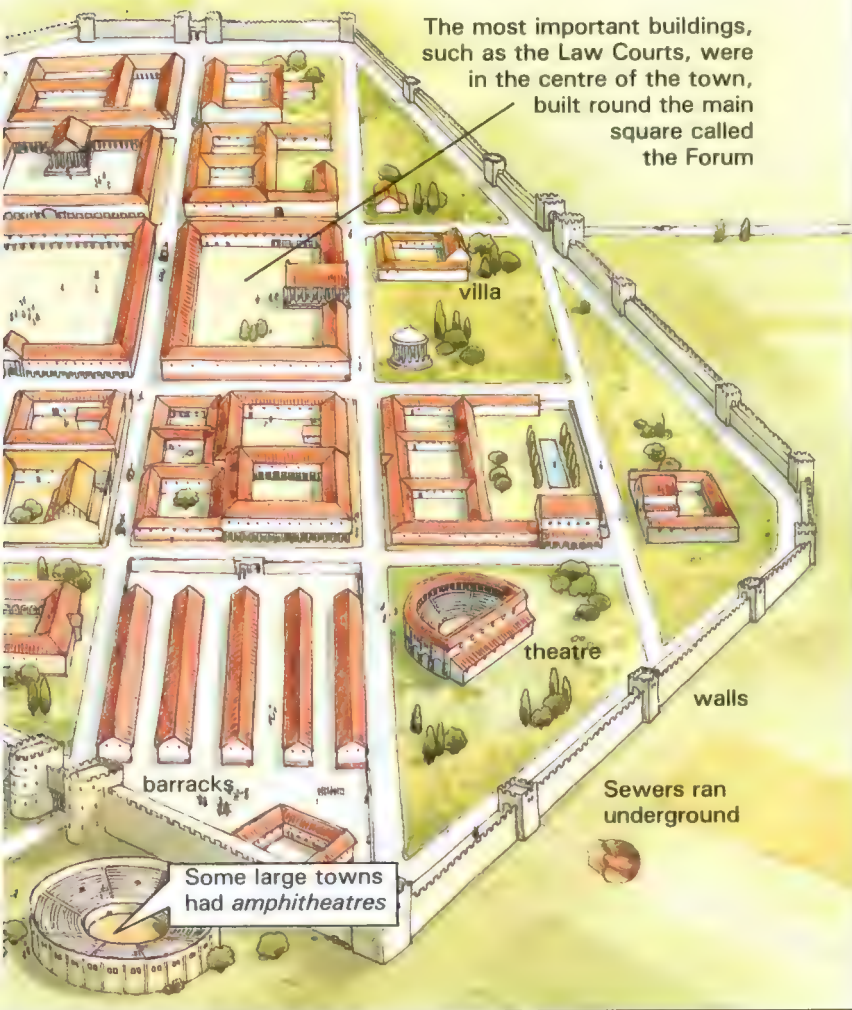


The only Roman amphitheatre left in Britain, at Caerleon, Gwent, in Wales



People came to the towns to buy and sell goods, to pay their taxes and to enjoy themselves.

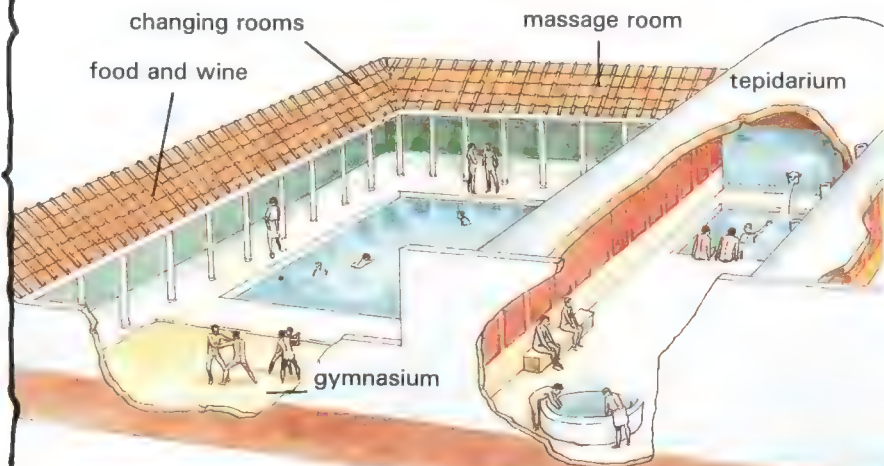
This illustration is based on the Roman town of Silchester, Hampshire



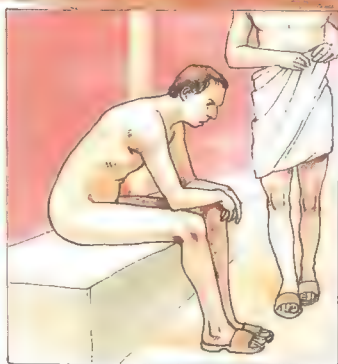


## The baths

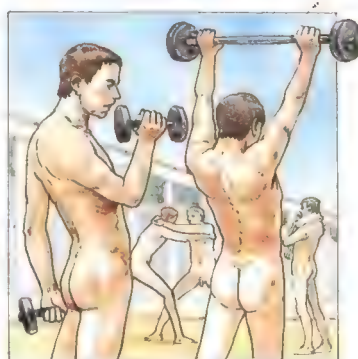
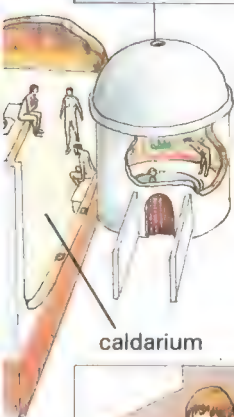
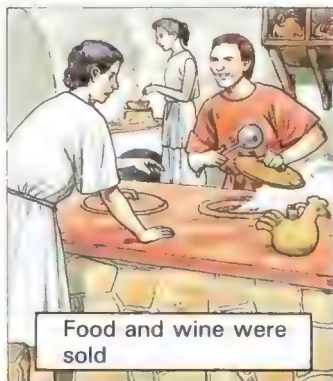
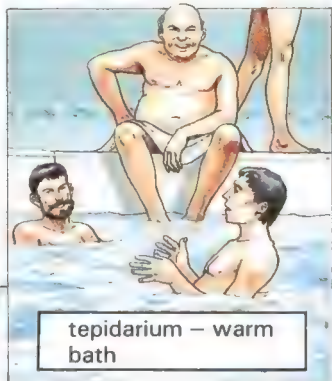
Romans went to the baths to keep clean, relax, meet their friends and to exercise. Women and men bathed at separate times of the day.



Clothes were left in a changing room



caldarium — a very hot sweat-bath



## In the house

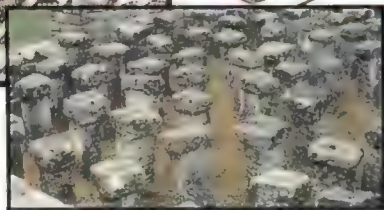
Rich Romans and Roman Britons lived in the towns, in fine houses which were built in the Roman style.

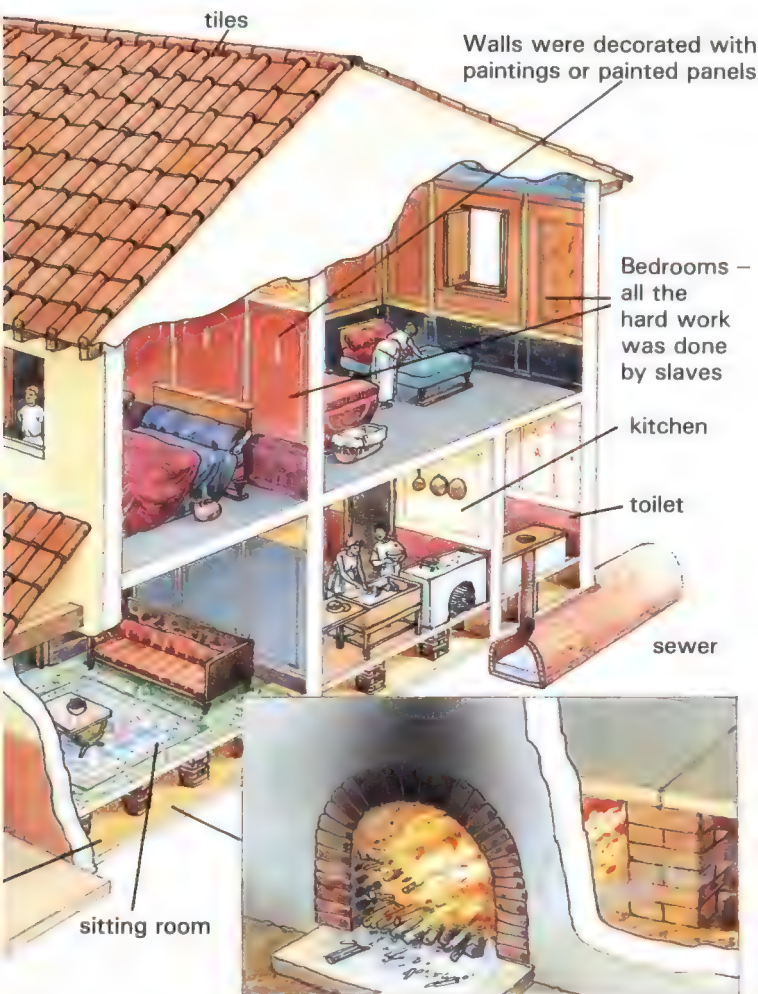
plastered walls

The floors were covered with *mosaics* – pictures or patterns made from tiny pieces of coloured marble stuck in cement



The remains of the central heating system at Chedworth Villa, Gloucester





Hot air from a fire in the cellar passed under the floor and up the walls to heat the house. This central heating system was called a *hypocaust*



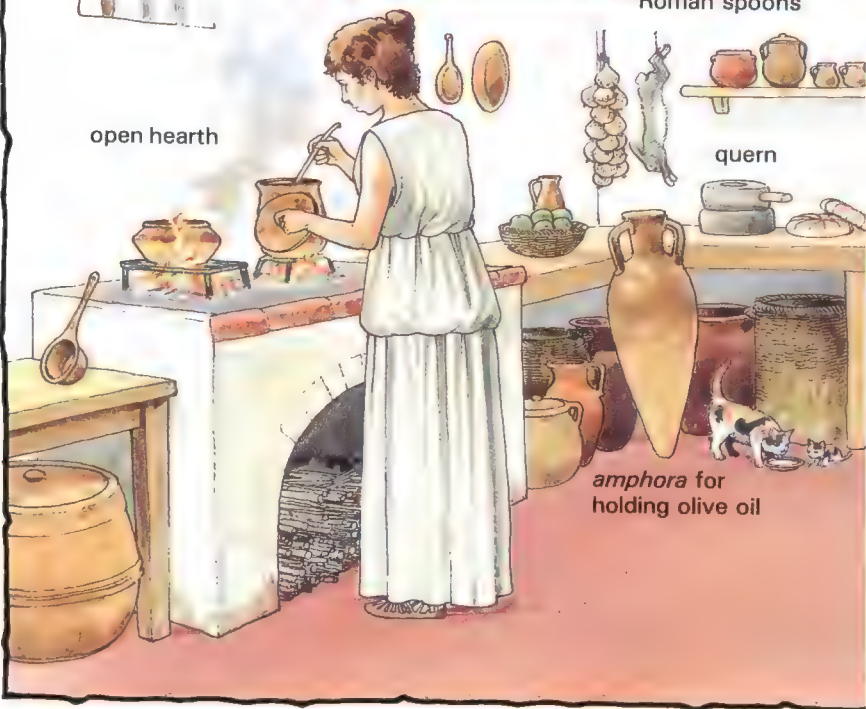
## Food in a rich household

The kitchen stove was an open hearth filled with *charcoal*. Most of the cooking pots were made of pottery although some were iron. The burning charcoal must have made the kitchen very hot for the slaves who were getting the food ready.



Roman spoons

open hearth



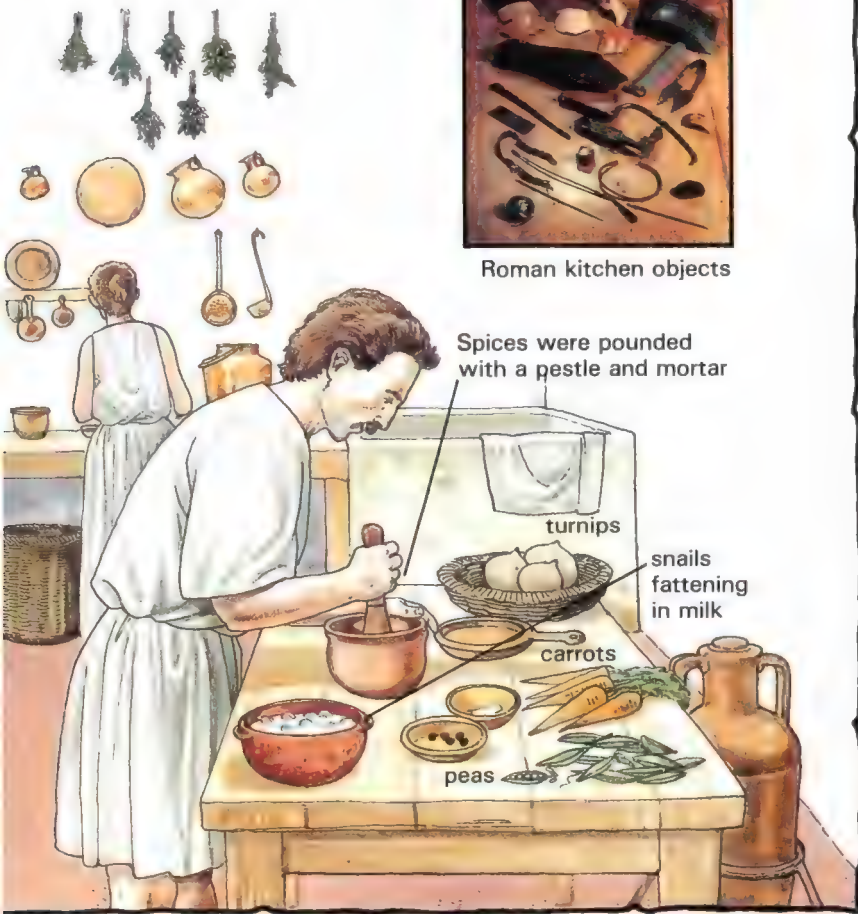
quern

amphora for  
holding olive oil

The kitchen slaves washed the vegetables and herbs in a stone sink. Baking was very difficult because there was no oven in the house, so bread, cakes and puddings were usually bought from a baker.



Roman kitchen objects



Spices were pounded with a pestle and mortar

turnips

snails  
fattening  
in milk

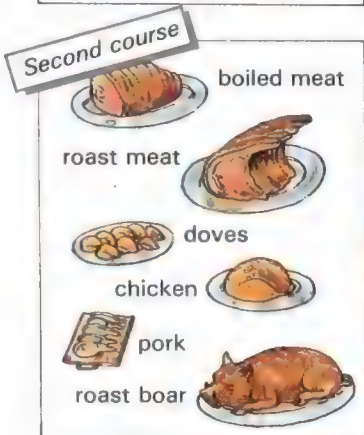
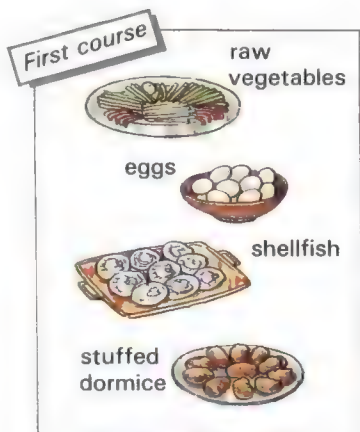
carrots

peas

## A feast

Most people were too poor to buy fish or meat. They ate mainly porridge, green vegetables and pancakes, washed down with watered wine.

This is what a feast in a rich Roman household may have looked like



Guests who were invited to a feast in a rich person's house lay on couches and ate with their fingers. Slaves cut up the meat for them, served out the food and brought round bowls of water so that the guests could wash their hands between courses. Poets and musicians provided entertainment.





## What people wore

Women wore sleeveless tunics made from linen or cotton, or, if they were very rich, silk. They wore coloured shawls over their tunics and as much jewellery as they could afford.



Hairstyles were often quite elaborate



shawl



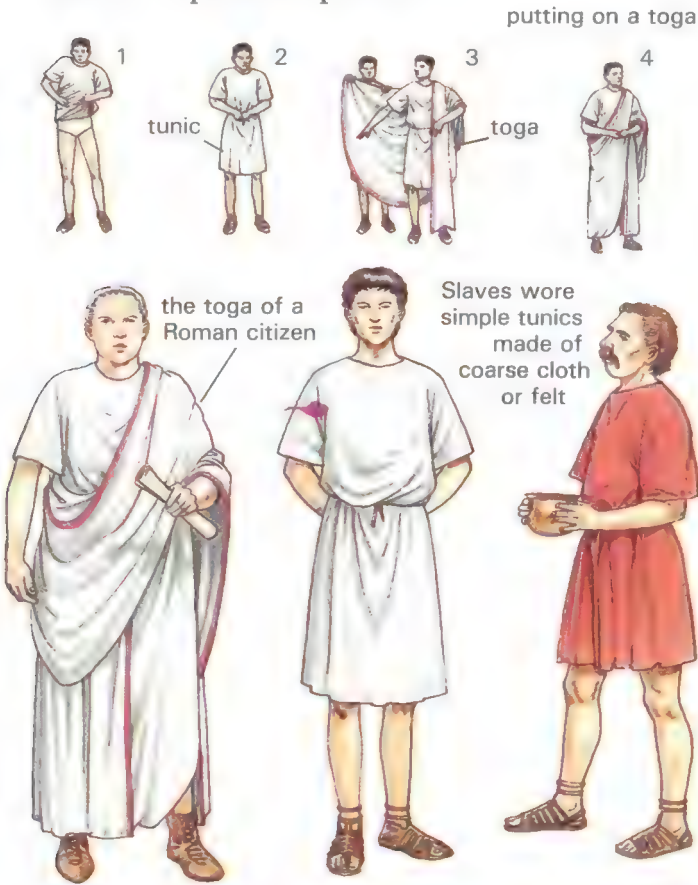
Female slaves wore simple tunics



Most Romans wore boots or sandals



Men wore togas – loose robes made from the best wool if they were rich, or from coarse cloth if they were poor. Togas could be any colour but officials usually wore white togas decorated with a coloured stripe to show that the wearer was an important person.

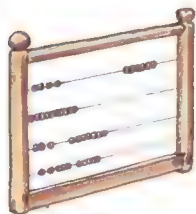


## School

Only the children of rich parents went to school, starting at about the age of seven. They left primary school at the age of twelve. Boys went on to secondary school but girls, who were allowed to marry at the age of twelve, usually stopped going to school or had a home tutor.

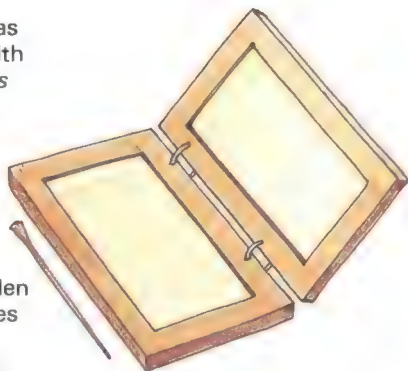


The lessons were dull, with lots of copying and learning by heart. Schoolmasters were very strict and some beat their pupils.



Maths was taught with an *abacus*

Pupils wrote on wooden boards spread with wax. They wrote in the wax with the point of a bronze or wooden *stylus* and rubbed out mistakes with the flattened end. The wax was smoothed and used many times



The school day began at dawn and lasted about six hours, with a mid-day break for the pupils to eat their picnic lunch. As the Romans had no weekends, the pupils had to work for seven days before they had a day off for market day.



Schools were very small, just one teacher with a class of ten pupils. Young children learned reading, writing and maths. Older children learned grammar, history, geography and how to speak well in public.





## Religion



The Romans brought their own religion to Britain. They worshipped many gods and goddesses in the new temples that they built. There was no special day for worship, so people went to the temple whenever they wanted and spoke to the god's statue to give thanks or to ask a favour.



Many Roman emperors were worshipped as gods after they died. This is a model of the temple of Claudius which was built at Colchester, Essex, about AD 54





People also worshipped at home. Each home had its own household gods. Every day the family said prayers, and left food and salt in front of a little shrine.



A statue of Mercury who was the messenger of the gods



This carving shows animals being taken for *sacrifice* to a household god. These sacrifices took place on important feast days

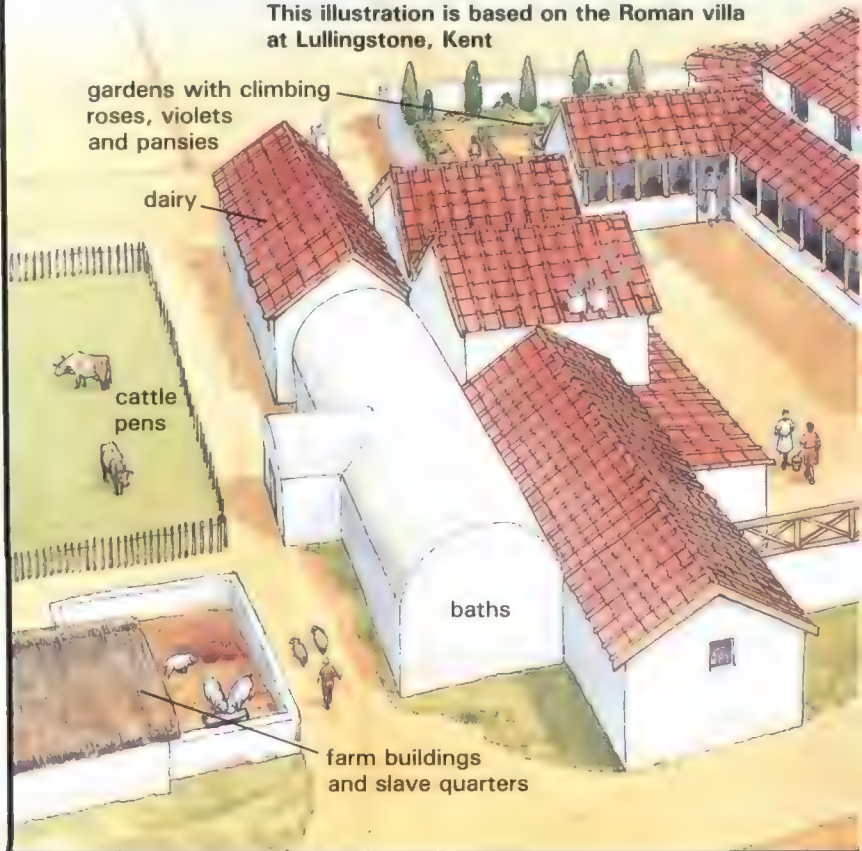
Soon after the Roman invasion of Britain, Christianity began to spread throughout the Roman Empire. Many emperors tried to stop it, but they failed. In AD 313, Christianity became the religion of the whole Roman Empire.



## The villa

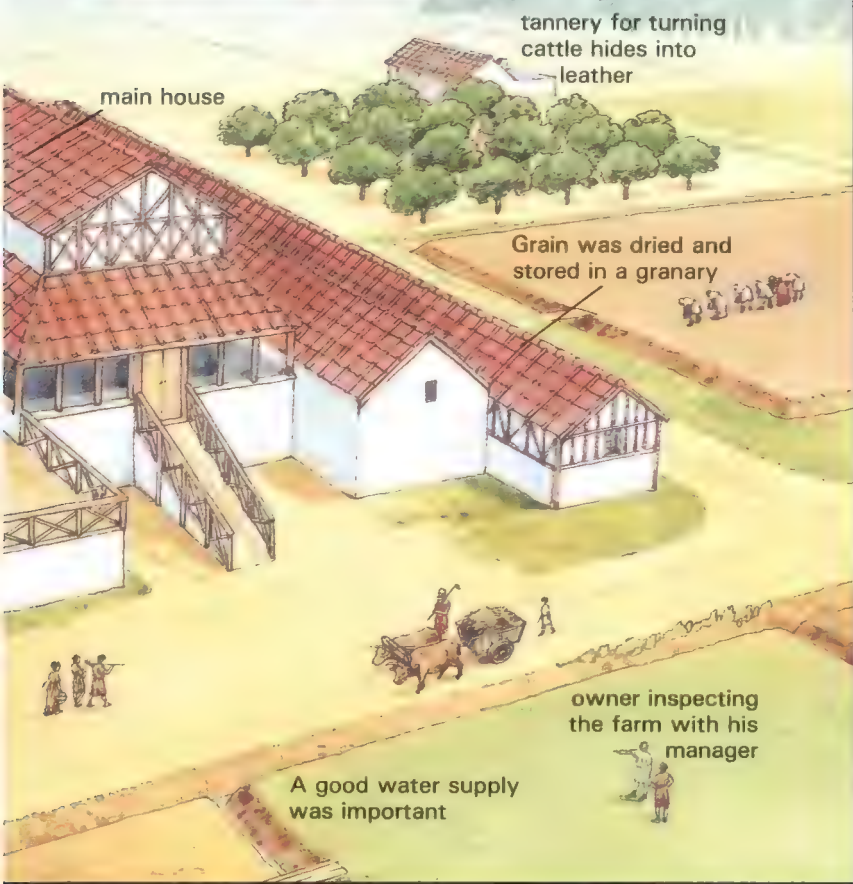
Many rich Romans owned a villa in the country. This was both a holiday home and a working farm, surrounded by fields and gardens. The owner was often away, either on business or working at his job in a nearby town. When he was not there, a manager ran the farm and organised the slaves.

This illustration is based on the Roman villa at Lullingstone, Kent





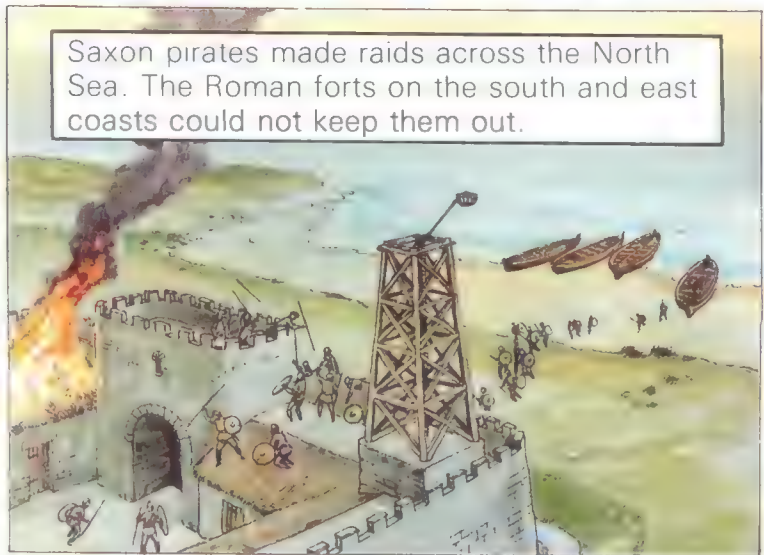
Excavations on the site of the Roman villa at Chedworth, Gloucester



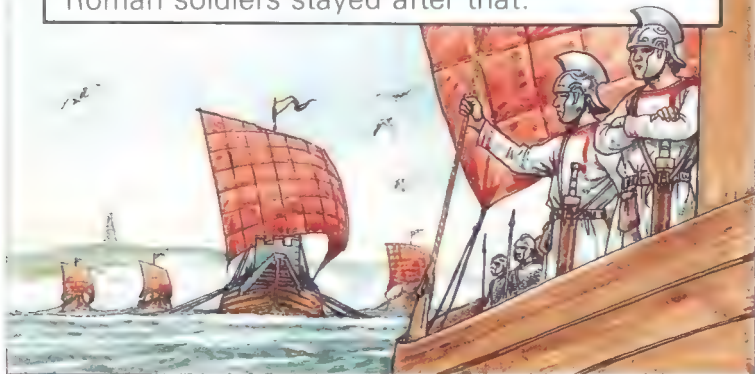


## The Romans leave Britain

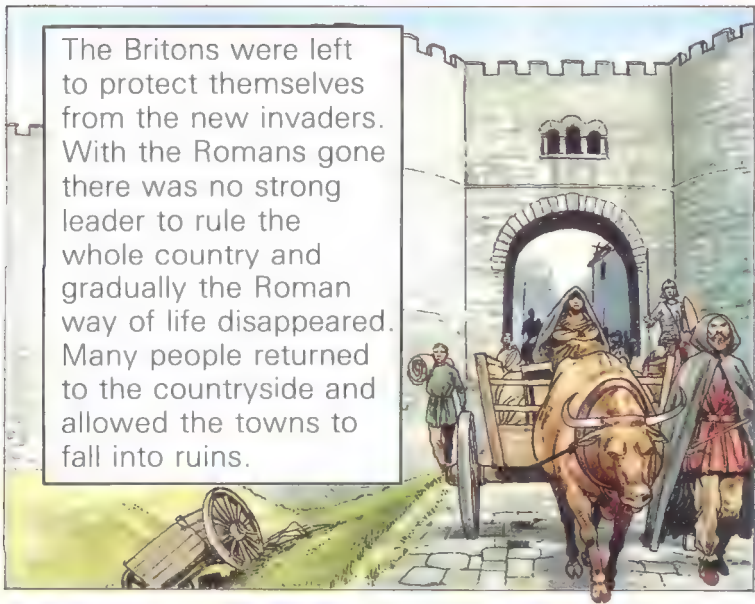
The Romans ruled Britain for over three hundred and fifty years. For some Roman Britons this was a time of peace and plenty, but many soldiers were needed to keep Britain safe. After AD 250, this task became harder.

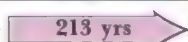
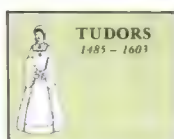
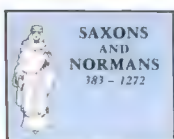


The Roman Empire itself was being attacked by barbarians. Gradually legions left Britain to defend other parts of the Empire. In AD 411, no more pay was sent from Rome and few Roman soldiers stayed after that.



The Britons were left to protect themselves from the new invaders. With the Romans gone there was no strong leader to rule the whole country and gradually the Roman way of life disappeared. Many people returned to the countryside and allowed the towns to fall into ruins.





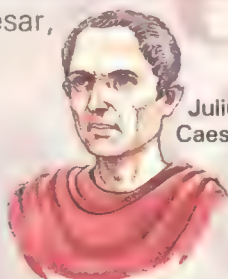
## TIMELINE GUIDE TO A HISTORY OF BRITAIN

### How we know

The events in this book happened over fifteen hundred years ago – so how do we know about them?

Historians use EVIDENCE, rather like detectives do, to piece a story together.

Some BOOKS describing Roman Britain have survived to this day. One of the best known Roman writers is Julius Caesar, who wrote a book called *Conquest of Gaul* in which he described his invasion of Britain. Other Roman historians wrote about Britain. One, Cornelius Tacitus, was son in law to Agricola, one of the Roman governors of Britain. Naturally enough his account of Agricola's rule was rather flattering!



Julius Caesar

There are still a lot of BUILDINGS which have survived as ruins to this day.



**STUARTS**  
1603 - 1714



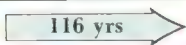
**GEORGIANS**  
1714 - 1830



**VICTORIANS**  
1830 - 1901



**MODERN  
TIMES**  
1901 - 1945

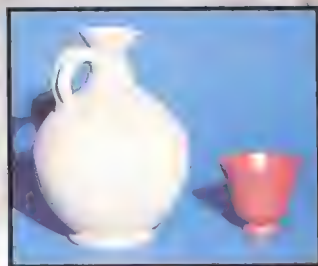


The remains of the  
Roman theatre at  
Verulamium –  
St Albans



Archaeologists have *excavated* many Roman sites. Often they have found these by looking at PHOTOGRAPHS taken from the air.

OBJECTS found by archaeologists are often stored in museums. Most of the objects are made of metal, stone or pottery. We have fewer objects made from cloth or wood



because they rot easily. There is a list of museums and buildings to visit on page 56.

Some of the old Roman objects seem strange to us. What do you think these are? You will find the answer on page 56.



## The Roman legacy

It is important to remember that the Romans brought many good things to Britain. They improved trade and the quality of life for many Britons.

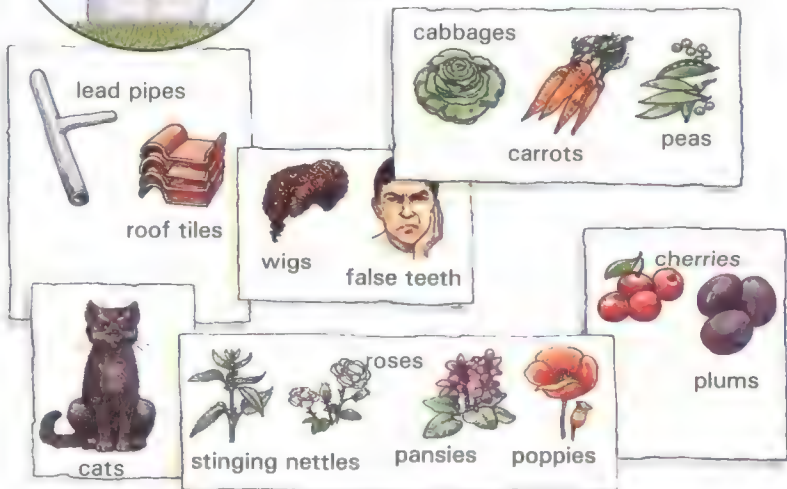
Roman towns showed the Britons that life could be comfortable and pleasant.

Roman laws meant that arguments could be settled peacefully. Some of our modern laws are based on Roman laws.



The Romans brought milestones to Britain. This drawing shows a stone milestone from Hadrian's reign. Originally it would have stood 2-3 metres high. The letters 'MPIII' mean 'four miles from...'

*Other things the Romans brought to Britain*



Many of our words are based on Latin words. The Romans gave us the names of all our months

**JANUARY** named after the Roman god JANUS. He could look both ways at once because he had two faces, and was the god of gateways



JANUS

**FEBRUARY** named after the Roman festival of FEBRUA

**MARCH** named after MARS, the Roman war god



MARS

**APRIL** from the Latin word APERIRE meaning 'to open' – because of the unfolding of buds and blossom in spring

**MAY** named after MAIA, the Roman mother goddess

**JUNE** named after JUNO, wife of Jupiter, King of the Roman gods



JUNO

**JULY** named after JULIUS Caesar, who decided that the year should begin in January. Until then it had begun in March

**AUGUST** named after the Roman Emperor AUGUSTUS



JULIUS  
CAESAR

**SEPTEMBER** from the Latin word SEPTEM, meaning 'seven'. It was originally the seventh month of the year

**OCTOBER** from the Latin word OCTO, meaning 'eight'. It was originally the eighth month of the year

**NOVEMBER** from the Latin word NOVEM, meaning 'nine'. It was originally the ninth month of the year

**DECEMBER** from the Latin word DECEM, meaning 'ten'. It was originally the tenth month of the year



AUGUSTUS

## **Glossary**

*abacus*: a frame holding beads for counting

*aqueduct*: a system of pipes and structures used to carry water from its source to the towns

*amphitheatre*: a circular or oval open-air theatre used for gladiator and animal fights

*amphora*: a tall pottery oil jar

*archaeologist*: someone who digs up and studies ancient remains

*archer*: a Bowman

*cavalry*: soldiers who fought on horseback

*Celts*: Iron Age tribes from Europe

*centurion*: an officer in charge of a century

*century*: a group of legionaries, about 80 soldiers

*charcoal*: baked wood which burns at a high temperature

*cohort*: a group of legionaries, about 480 soldiers

*Druid*: a priest

*eagle*: the standard of a legion. It was a bronze model of an eagle on a long staff

*excavate*: to dig up ancient remains

*groma*: an instrument used for surveying

*hypocaust*: underfloor hot-air central heating system

*legion*: a group of legionaries, about 5,000 soldiers

*legionary*: a member of a legion

*milecastle*: a Roman fort on Hadrian's wall

*mosaic*: a picture or pattern made of coloured tiles

*quern*: two round stones, one on top of the other for grinding corn

*sacrifice*: an offering made to the gods

*siege-engine*: a machine used to capture a castle

*slinger*: a soldier who hurled clay or lead bullets using a long leather thong called a sling

*stylus*: a pointed metal instrument used for scratching words in wax



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**Some places you can visit to find out more about the Romans**

**MUSEUMS**

British Museum, London  
Caerleon Museum, Gwent  
The Castle, Colchester, Essex  
City and County Museum, Lincoln  
Corinium Museum, Cirencester, Gloucestershire  
Corstopitum Roman Fort, Corbridge, Northumberland  
Fishbourne Roman Palace and Museum,  
near Chichester, Sussex  
Housesteads, Hadrian's Wall Museum and Fort,  
Hexham, Northumberland  
Jewry Wall Museum, Leicester  
Museum of London, London  
Roman Baths Museum, Bath  
Verulamium Museum, St Albans

**VILLAS, FORTS, etc**

Bignor Villa, West Sussex  
Burgh Castle, Great Yarmouth  
Chesters Roman Fort, Chollerford, Northumberland  
Chedworth Villa, Gloucestershire  
Lullingstone Villa, Sevenoaks, Kent  
Lunt Fort, Baginton, near Coventry  
Maiden Castle, Dorset  
Roman Army Museum, Greenhead, Northumberland  
Roman Lighthouse, Dover  
Roman Villa, Rockbourne, Fordingbridge, Hampshire  
Verulamium Theatre, St Albans  
Vindolanda Roman Fort, Bardon Mill, Northumberland  
Wroxeter Roman Baths, Shropshire

The picture on page 51 shows an oil jar and scraper (called a strigil). These were used by Roman Britons in the baths. They rubbed the oil on their skin to bring the dirt to the surface and then used the strigil to scrape it off



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Published by LADYBIRD BOOKS LTD  
Loughborough Leicestershire UK  
and USA - LADYBIRD BOOKS INC  
Auburn Maine 04210

Printed in the United Kingdom  
by Ladybird Books Ltd - Loughborough

£3.50  
net

ISBN 0-7214-3366-9



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